

Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

Fact Sheet



DOE Proposes Modification To Hazardous Waste Facility Permit

Construction and Use of Hazardous Waste Disposal Units (HWDUs)

Background

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has proposed a modification to its Hazardous Waste Facility Permit (HWFP) for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) to support recent DOE initiatives to speed cleanup of transuranic (TRU) waste throughout the DOE complex.

The existing HWFP describes WIPP's design capacity as 175,600 m³ of TRU waste and describes eight hazardous waste disposal units (HWDUs) known as Panels 1 through 8. In the 1990s, during the permit application process, DOE estimated that only about 54,000 m³ of TRU waste would be disposed of in Panels 1, 2, and 3 during the initial ten-year term of the permit. They further estimated that only Panels 1, 2, 3, 4, and disposal area access drifts would need to be constructed during this initial ten-year term of the permit. Based on these early estimates, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) issued WIPP's permit in October 1996, with conditions limiting disposal of TRU waste to Panels 1, 2, and 3, and limiting construction to Panels 1, 2, 3, 4 and associated disposal panel access drifts during the initial ten-year term of the HWFP. The current term of the HWFP expires in November of 2009.

The rate at which generator sites are shipping waste to WIPP has increased from the date the facility first received waste in 1999 to the present day. Current DOE shipping schedules and forecasts show a continued increase in the rate of waste receipts at WIPP. Because the design capacity is being utilized at a faster rate than originally estimated, more than three HWDUs will be needed during the current term of the HWFP.

What is Proposed?

DOE submitted a Class 3 permit modification request to NMED on May 13, 2003, seeking to change provisions of the HWFP to allow for construction of Panels 5,

6, 7, and 8, and allow disposal of TRU waste in Panels 4, 5, 6, and 7 during the current ten-year term of the HWFP.

This modification does not change the predetermined mission of WIPP as stated in the Land Withdrawal Act. WIPP is designed to dispose of 175,600 m³ of defense-generated TRU waste. This modification does not seek to change the amount of overall waste received at the WIPP facility, it simply changes the rate at which WIPP utilizes its design capacity during the initial ten-year term of the HWFP. This change will allow WIPP to support the important goals of environmental cleanup and risk reduction around the DOE complex. This modification will not adversely impact WIPP's ability to protect human health or the environment.

Comments

Comments for the record must be sent to Mr. Steve Zappe, New Mexico Environment Department, 2905 Rodeo Park Drive, Building 1, Santa Fe, NM 87505. They may also be e-mailed: steve_zappe@nmenv.state.nm.us or faxed to 505-428-2567. Only written comments will be accepted and must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. MDT on July 14, 2003. A copy of the permit modification may be viewed or copied at the NMED offices of Mr. Zappe. To be placed on the WIPP mailing list, contact Mr. Zappe at the address above.

***For more
Information***

For more information about transuranic waste shipments and procedures, call the WIPP Information Center at 1-800-336-WIPP (9477). You also may visit the WIPP Home Page at <http://www.wipp.ws>. Comments to the Permittees regarding this permit modification may be sent to Mr. Bobby St. John, Washington TRU Solutions, P.O. Box 2078, Carlsbad, NM 88221.